



Of Interest

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THE 3RD ACR IN TAL'AFAR: CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

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The Third Armored Cavalry Regiment (3d ACR) is a self-contained, mobile reconnaissance force made up of *Bradley* fighting vehicles, *Abrams* tanks, Humvees, its own observation and attack helicopters, and some 5,200 troops. Bristling with hi-tech weapons systems, it is capable of a wide variety of missions, though its prototypical one in conventional settings is to serve as a higher commander's eyes and ears by crossing the line of demarcation in search of enemy armor. Its full range of weaponry makes it perfectly capable of defending itself, or even of wiping out enemy armored units, should the situation require it.

This is precisely what the 3d ACR thought it would be doing in Iraq. Like most U.S. Army units, the 3d ACR has spent the better part of the last 4 years deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Their first tour took them from their home post at Ft. Carson, Colorado, to Iraq in April 2003 through April 2004, a time frame since designated OIF I. They returned to Iraq 10 months later in February 2005 as part of OIF III, this time coming home to Ft. Carson in May 2006. In July 2006, the entire Regiment was reassigned and moved to Ft. Hood, Texas.

In OIF I, however, the shooting war with the Iraqi Army was over before the 3d ACR made its way into Iraq in late April 2003, and, taking on the subsequent insurgency, called for tactics that would take them out of their customary fighting mode. As armored scouts, they trained and expected to fight from inside their tanks and *Bradleys* where their mindset and unofficial motto is "death before dismount."² The counterinsurgency mode, to the contrary, called for them to leave their armored vehicles and move about in "leather personnel carriers," i.e., boots, as foot soldiers. Adjustment to these changes was rather uneven—some units in the Regiment handled it well, while others did not.

The 10 months between the two deployments provided the new commander of the 3d ACR an opportunity to retrain and, in a sense, retool, for these altered contingencies on the ground in Iraq. In its second deployment, the 3d ACR was the central force in Operation Restore Rights, a mission to retake Tal'Afar, a city in northwestern Iraq that had fallen under the control of insurgents. How the 3d

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ACR accomplished this mission has been touted as one of the success stories of the war in Iraq. In this paper, we draw on information from interviews and focus groups we conducted with 3d ACR soldiers to explore the conduct and implications of the Tal’Afar campaign.

Theoretical, Methodological Considerations.

The town of Tal’Afar is located in Iraq’s northwestern Ninewa province about 240 miles from Baghdad, 30 miles west of Mosul, and 40 miles east of the Iraqi-Syrian border.³ Though there is no available official census count, it is estimated that 220,000 inhabitants live within the 9 square miles of densely-packed buildings that make up the town proper. The Tal’Afar area historically has been heavily populated by Kurds and Turkomen, a distinct Iraqi Turkic ethnic group. However, as part of Saddam Hussein’s program of “Arabization” during the 1970s, Sunni Arabs loyal to the Ba’ath Party were relocated to the area specifically to dilute the influence of the Kurds. As a result, most Kurds in the area now live in villages to the north of Tal’Afar, while the area’s Sunni Arabs are found in villages to the south. Yet another ethnic-religious group, the Yezidi, live in villages to the east of Tal’Afar.

In Tal’Afar itself, the population is mostly Turkomen, about 75 percent of whom are Sunni Muslims, while a quarter are Shi’ites. Both groups are Arabic speakers, though a dialect of Turkish is their, and hence the town’s, language of choice. Local customs therefore reflect a blend of Turkish and Arabic influences—e.g., Turkoman men and boys often wear Arab-style *dishdashas* (white, outer robes) and checkered headscarves, and many of Tal’Afar’s residents maintain ties with relatives in Turkey. The town and surrounding area consists of mostly flat, desert-like terrain seemingly unsuitable to Western eyes for its principal agricultural product, wheat. Other local crops include potatoes, tomatoes, raisins, and cucumbers, usually served in the local diet with grilled lamb and unleavened bread. Tal’Afar contains 18 distinctly named neighborhoods, each consisting of several dozen extended families sharing a distinct tribal identity. Each neighborhood, singly or in conjunction with two or three others, is affiliated with a local sheik who represents its interests in the town’s council of sheiks. The council of sheiks also appoints the town’s mayor.

During the 3d ACR’s first deployment to Iraq, its area of operation was al-Anbar province, located to the south and west of Ninewa. Roughly the size of West Virginia, al-Anbar was an enormous area of operation for 5,200 troops, regardless of how mobile they might be. Its large Sunni majority and its proximity to the Syrian border eventually made it a hotbed of insurgency. The 3d ACR’s experience here typified the problems endemic to the American mission in Iraq during that time frame. The 3d ACR expected to be fighting armored components of the Iraqi Army and had trained accordingly, visiting the Joint Readiness Training Center at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, in the fall of 2002 to brush up

on armored warfighting in an urban environment. However, by the time the 3d ACR arrived and moved into position in Iraq, the Iraqi Army already had dissipated or been “sent home” as part of Paul Bremer’s (then U.S. Administrator in Iraq) program of “De-Ba’athification.” This left open the question of exactly what the 3d ACR’s mission was. The first signs of an insurgency began to appear, then intensify, during the summer and fall of 2003. The insurgents carried out, clumsily at first, hit-and-run attacks on U.S. convoys, checkpoints, and staging areas. To complicate matters, they wore civilian clothes and mingled purposefully with civilian bystanders to make forceful response by American units difficult.

This situation created difficulties for the 3d ACR at two levels. One, the Secretary of Defense and other top officials resisted the notion that an insurgency was underway. Consequently, no coherent strategic plan was developed and communicated to units on the ground for responding to these attacks. Each unit therefore was left to develop its own response.⁴ Two, the 3d ACR was neither configured nor trained to fight person-on-person, much less confront an ill-defined insurgency. Featuring *Bradley* fighting vehicles, *Abrams* tanks, *Apache* attack helicopters, and armed-to-the-teeth dismounts, it settled into aggressive, armor-based patrolling and searching routines. Though well-intentioned, these heavy-handed techniques were better suited for a conventional battlefield than one populated by towns, villages, and, of course, civilians.⁵ However, commanders of some squadrons during this deployment sought and successfully applied alternatives to conventional battlefield tactics.

The 3d ACR’s predicament and response was typical of that by most American units in 2003 and 2004, and produced a torrent of discussion and a scramble of adaptive strategies in the U.S. Army (and, similarly, in the Marine Corps). For example, a search through *Military Review*, a refereed journal devoted to “cutting edge” issues in military affairs and strategic/tactical studies, revealed dozens of articles between 2004 and 2006 on conventional vs. counterinsurgency warfare and on “lessons learned” in bridging the gap between the two by Army units in Iraq. For example, Gen. David Petraeus⁶ (now Commander of U.S. Forces in Iraq) wrote of his application of counterinsurgency principles while commander of the 101st Airborne Division in 2003 and early 2004, and Maj. Gen. John Chiarelli⁷ and Maj. Gen. John Batiste,⁸ commanders of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 1st Infantry Division, respectively, during the same timeframe, described their use of “full spectrum” warfare.

These and similar articles and books characterize U.S. military deployments since the end of the Cold War and the strategic and tactical challenges they present for a military designed and equipped for conventional warfare. The common theme is that virtually all these actions have been in response to nonstate actors without formal militaries in “sovereignty challenged” regions,⁹ engagements labeled as “savage” but “small,”¹⁰ “4th generation,”¹¹ “full-spectrum,”¹² and “long” wars.¹³ They also assert the U.S. military’s reluctance to

adjust to these contingencies, for to do so would have required a departure from larger trends within the military toward a greater reliance on technological gadgetry and less on “boots on the ground.” Ironically, successful forays against nonconventional forces rely more centrally on the latter than the former.

In the summer and fall of 2004, we had the opportunity to collect oral histories from soldiers from the 3d ACR (and from the 3d Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division) who had just returned from Iraq to Ft. Carson.¹⁴ Our research, based upon these oral histories, showed that these soldiers and their commanders had made varying degrees of effort to adjust to the gap between their expectations of what they would be doing in Iraq and what the realities on the ground called for them to do. For the most part, they sought to retrain and retool “on the spot” and generally felt they had done a good job doing so. The rough spots revolved around their frustrations in determining “who was the enemy,” from fighting insurgents who used guerrilla tactics while mingling among civilians, and in maintaining an even-handed mindset after taking casualties of their own.

We approached this dilemma from the standpoint of expectancy theory¹⁵ and psychological contract theory,¹⁶ both of which address the implicit but informal “contract” that forms between organizations and its members. The latter theory in particular addresses what is likely to occur when members perceive a “breach of contract,” i.e., feel that their expectations and good faith have been violated. We concluded in this phase of the research that these soldiers and their commanders felt that the organization, in this case the Army and its higher chain of command, had given them a reasonable set of expectations, had prepared them accordingly, and were not to blame for the realities that developed in the post-invasion phase of the war in Iraq. However, we also warned that this interpretation could easily change should the military not address these realities in subsequent deployments, especially those stemming from the gap between conventional vs. counterinsurgency warfare.¹⁷

We again had an opportunity to conduct interviews with soldiers from the 3d ACR upon their return from the second deployment in Iraq. The window of opportunity this time was much more fleeting, as the unit simultaneously was preparing for its move from Ft. Carson to Ft. Hood. Hence, we decided in this round to conduct a series of focus groups as the central part of our post-deployment interviews. In addition to in-depth interviews with several respondents whom we had interviewed after the first deployment, we held eight focus group sessions. These sessions were conducted with soldiers or officers from a particular unit sharing the same military occupational specialty. These specialties included armored scouts, tankers, military intelligence, maintenance, and air defense artillery (operating in a nonair defense capacity).

Each group consisted of four to six soldiers or officers who volunteered to participate. Because sessions were videotaped and would become part of the historical collection at the Ft. Carson’s Mountain Post Museum, we emphasized

that we could assure neither anonymity nor confidentiality. Sessions typically lasted 1-2 hours, though some lasted longer. Our question list and format were adapted from that used in our oral history interviews to better match focus-group characteristics. Further, because we were aware of the Regiment's Tal'Afar campaign through news coverage before its return to Ft. Carson, the focus-group question list also contained items specifically relating to Tal'Afar.

3d ACR's Preparations for the Second Deployment.

Col. H. M. McMaster, a Central Command staff officer in 2003 (later, commander of the 3d ACR during its second deployment), described the early efforts by U.S. units as follows: "When we first got here, we made a lot of mistakes. We were like a blind man, trying to do the right thing but breaking a lot of things."¹⁸ The problems spawned by this strategy are many: U.S. forces, lacking a connection with the populace and therefore lacking sound intelligence about the insurgents, found it difficult to figure out who to kill or capture, consequently did not kill and capture *insurgents* effectively, and frequently came to be regarded by frustrated and angry Iraqis as more of an army of occupation than of liberation. Kalev Sepp, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and a former Special Forces officer in Iraq, summarized the situation this way:¹⁹

You'll get some people that way, but the failure of that approach is evident: they get Hussein, they get his sons, they continue every week to kill more, capture more, they've got facilities full of thousands of detainees, yet there are more insurgents than there were when they started.

Tal'Afar figured tangentially into the action during this time frame (and the 3d ACR never went there during its first deployment). Since the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, religious-based tension in the area increased dramatically. By virtue of the Shi'a takeover of the national government, Shi'a Turkomen became arbiters of the town's government and police force to the chagrin and then resentment of the more numerous Sunni Turkomen. Further, an influx of Iraqi *jihadists* and of foreign fighters from Syria (and elsewhere) used Tal'Afar as a base of operations and became part of a volatile mix for control of the local government. Since 2003, U.S. forces occasionally swept through the area and town, targeting primarily Sunni neighborhoods. In the absence of a continuing U.S. presence, however, Tal'Afar eventually fell under the control of what Col. McMaster termed a "hybrid insurgency" blending Sunni malcontents, Iraqi *jihadists*, and foreign fighters.

Col. McMaster assumed command of the 3d ACR shortly after its return to Ft. Carson following its first deployment. While at his position at Central Command, he had reached the conclusion that the military threat on the ground was indeed an insurgency, calling therefore for a strategy of counterinsurgency. Seemingly a

simple play on words, his acknowledgement, however, called for American units to think and behave much differently than they generally had to this point. Rather than the “kill-capture” strategy of 2003 and 2004, the new counterinsurgency thinking, officially termed “clear, hold, and build,” explicitly recognized that the solution is only partly military and that the lethal, somewhat indiscriminate use of force so productive in a conventional battlefield, here is essentially counterproductive.

Though the best equipped, best trained, most technologically sophisticated, and most lethal fighting force in the world, the U.S. military is not, as the 3d ACR discovered during its first deployment, institutionally suited to this strategy. Col. McMaster and his staff therefore set out to prepare for doing things differently the second time around. Instead of returning to Ft. Polk for field exercises, the 3d ACR constructed its own training sites and regimen at Ft. Carson. One of the fundamental changes was an emphasis on training each soldier, regardless of military specialty (MOS), to be a light infantryman. A 3d ACR NCO, a tanker, who served during both of the unit’s deployments described the shift as follows:

And so that’s where it was a huge training difference when we went back for OIF-III. . . . [W]hat really changed I think . . . was, I don’t care if you’re logistics, I don’t care if you’re a cook, I don’t care if you’re a mechanic, I don’t care what you are, when you’re out on that road, you’re a United States Army soldier. And you need to learn to fight. And McMaster . . . nailed into the head [of] everybody their primary focus was as a soldier fighter. . . . Everybody got training in dismount training and four-man stack training and live-fire convoy exercises. So weapons qualification was very important for all soldiers and not just your combat arms guys.

Matter of fact, I’ll never forget it, [Col. McMaster] pulled all the support guys together. He was like, look, you’re gonna be the fighters. You’re it! He said, all these guys over there on the tanks and *Brads*—[the bad guys are] . . . not going to face-off with them anymore. OIF-I they did and, call it insurgency Darwinism, whatever you want to call it, the dumb ones, they die off quick, . . . he said, but now they will be attacking the fuelers. They’ll attack the logistic convoys. He said, you are my killers. You are the guys who really need to get your ground convoy operations under a handle. You need to have recovery plans in place. You need to have your cas-evac, casualty evacuation plans. And he really, he really focused on the importance of getting those guys combat ready. I just, I thought that was incredibly impressive.

In a similar vein, Col. McMaster added the requirement that each soldier in the regiment, rather than only the medics and medical service personnel, be combat life-saver certified. The same NCO explained:

The other thing was a huge focus on what we call CLS, Combat Life-Savers, . . . which basically means everybody in the unit knows how to give an IV to a soldier who has been wounded and that is just, I can’t tell you how important that is at the small unit level because it’s that golden hour of saving that soldier’s life. It is stabilizing him and basically keeping him from major loss of blood.

In addition, the unit also developed Iraq-specific training scenarios. The site of some of this training was an Iraqi-style “village” peopled by soldiers and Arab Americans dressed in *dishdashas* to play the role of Iraqis. These role-playing scenarios simulated situations the troops typically encountered in Iraq—manning checkpoints or searching homes—and emphasized culturally aware methods for carrying out these procedures effectively, i.e., doing so in a manner to ferret out the “bad guys” without alienating the bystanders. Col. McMaster also forbade the use of derogatory terms (*hajis*, *Mujis*, *ragheads*) to refer to Iraqis, cautioned against swearing in front of Iraqis, and urged the reading of books on Iraqi history and culture. In addition, he mandated that troops within each squadron should be trained in conversational Arabic. According to a 3d ACR NCO:

Col. McMaster actually coordinated with . . . Pikes Peak Community College, and we sent two soldiers per platoon, so that's about two soldiers in every 16—we just basically said, look we're gonna lose these guys for 2 months. We'll just keep tabs on them but they're gonna go to school for 2 months like a regular college student. And they went every day, 5 days a week, and learned Arabic. . . . And so what that really gave you is internal interpreters that you could trust. . . . [Usually] you don't have interpreters at the lowest levels. That was one of our biggest issues during OIF-I was not [being] able to understand what the [Iraqis] were trying to tell us and, uh, we had no way to communicate with them. . . . So, to have two guys per platoon . . . with that level of language training was awesome. It paid huge dividends.

Finally, Col. McMaster repeatedly stressed that only a small fraction of the population were hard-core insurgents or *jihadists* who needed to be dealt with coercively. The bulk of the populace, he argued, was sitting on the fence, waiting to see what the Americans had in mind. A fundamental theme therefore was, “Do not do the enemy’s work,” i.e., soldiers were expected to develop a mindset that treated Iraqi citizens with respect, so as not to push fence-sitters into the insurgent group.

The combination of these changes set a new tone for the second deployment. One NCO remarked of the changes, “I gotta say the training we did and the plan we had before we went, especially with only a 10-month window, I don’t think you could have set better conditions for us to be successful in Iraq.” However, this NCO also noted that morale had taken a bit of dip prior to the second deployment. This was due, in his view, to the rather short period between deployments and to intense “negative media coverage” of the incidents at Abu Ghraib during those months.

Operation Restoring Rights - Challenges.

The 3d ACR redeployed to Iraq in February 2005. At first, the unit was sent to an area in south Baghdad where it was responsible for area security. Known as a tough draw, the predominantly Sunni area had been the scene of extensive, often

effective, insurgent activity against American convoys, particularly in the form of roadside bombs and sniper fire. To complicate matters, national police checkpoints in the area typically were manned by Shi'ite policemen, whom the local Sunnis regarded with suspicion and distrust at best. Though suited to handle such a mission, many in the 3d ACR were surprised to receive the assignment, expecting instead to establish relations and manage the town of Mosul and surrounding area.

By May, however, the bulk of the regiment had a town and surrounding area to quell—Tal'Afar. By all accounts, the area was a mess. For example, the following quotes reveal a focus group's characterization of the situation in Tal'Afar when the 3d ACR arrived:

When we showed up it was a ghost town. It was the Wild West pretty much. I mean people couldn't go out in the streets 'cause they were being shot at. . . .

Before we got there, Tal'Afar was more or less sort of a pushover for the insurgency to come in and sort of set up camp in there so that they could supply logistics, personnel, anything they wanted because the local government was very weak.

Back when the city was at its worst, you couldn't send a Humvee through the town. We did not go in with anything less than two Bradleys or two tanks.

Indeed, factional fighting among Tal'Afar's ethnic/religious groups had left it particularly vulnerable to occupation by insurgent groups from elsewhere in Iraq or across the border in Syria. In 2005, the provincial police chief in Mosul had appointed a nonlocal, Muhammed Najim Abadullah al-Jibouri, to replace the former police chief, a Shi'ite. It was hoped that al-Jibouri, a Sunni and former officer in Saddam Hussein's Army, could set a different tone in the activities of the police, mostly Shi'ites, in fighting Tal'Afar's insurgents, mostly Sunnis. (Al-Jibouri later was promoted to mayor.) Knight-Ridder Newspapers reporter Joe Galloway later interviewed al-Jibouri, and described the level of sectarian and insurgent violence the 3d ACR was walking into:²⁰

Abductions and executions were the order of the day, with beheaded victims thrown into the street at a busy traffic circle in the heart of the city. A young man was killed by the terrorists, al-Jibouri said, then disemboweled and his body stuffed with explosives. When his father came to get the body, the bomb exploded, killing him, too.

Further increasing the importance of wresting control of the city from these factions, intelligence reports asserted Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, the reputed head of al-Qaeda in Iraq at that time, was operating from that area. Beyond problems with the police, the Iraqi army was not only ill-prepared to take on this challenge, it was often perceived as a hindrance. A 3d ACR NCO stated: "I remember just when we first got there Iraqi soldiers, they'd have a fight over a water bottle and

shoot each other. I mean, ridiculous stuff." The same NCO summed up the situation this way:

So when we get there, you're dealing with a very determined enemy because they're sitting on the route from Syria to Mosul, and this is the main staging area for attacks on Mosul. . . . So the regiment was sent there to cut the supply and essentially eliminate their staging point. And so not only did we have a very determined enemy because of the necessity for their support in Mosul but [the people have] seen us put a hurt to the enemy. They've seen us draw back and the enemy move back in. I mean they saw it twice already.

And a 3d ACR supply officer described the insurgents there as "ruthless," reiterating the story Police Chief al-Jibouri had told to Galloway. He explained:

Col. McMaster called them evil, and I agree. They completely controlled Tal' Afar before we got there. They had a recruiting operation, bomb building factory. They terrorized the city by killing people and leaving their headless bodies in the street. Or they'd kill a child and then pack his body with explosives, and leave it for the parents to come pick up and kill them too. What kind of person does that?

A 3d ACR helicopter pilot noted the strain this puts on soldiers:

[These are] things that you never want to encounter the insurgency using against you and having to fight through it professionally. And targeting civilians eats at a soldier's soul because that's what we're there to protect. And for them to target them there is nothing worse than targeting innocents. And we take that personally.

Despite the grip the enemy had on the town and the obvious reluctance of some of the townspeople to support the U.S. forces, a surprising number of the locals were welcoming and supportive. When asked his opinion of the local population, a supply officer noted: "These people are incredibly brave. They just want stability, that's all. They want to see democracy succeed. So they take a lot of risks to help us out."

In addition to the risks implied above, there were several other challenges facing U.S. and Iraqi forces in the battle for Tal'Afar. The overall insurgency in Iraq had become more sophisticated by this time. Virtually all our respondents concurred that the enemy they encountered this time around had become much smarter in "training, tactics, and procedures" (TTPs), maybe because the "dumber ones" had been killed or captured by this time. For example, there was consensus that the insurgents developed more lethal IEDs (improvised explosive devices) in the form of triple-stacked and shaped charges, making route security of primary importance to all operations. As one NCO with an armored scout unit explained:

[The enemy] got smarter. I remember one time (during our first deployment) in Hadithah, we'd find people with RPGs wrapped in plastic bags. They figured that if

they can shoot through the plastic bag they can hit our vehicle force field on the *Bradley*. [Then] they started switching over to tiny rockets to pierce holes in the *Bradleys*. And then they also started to, started realizing like, oh, maybe we should triple stack (IEDs). Then they put holes in the *Bradley* from the bottom. The second time when we went to Iraq, they already knew all that stuff if they wanted to hit us better.

A continued difficulty was identifying the enemy, who could be “smiling at you in the day and attacking at night.” The following comment shows the skills acquired by a helicopter pilot in this regard:

The enemy is completely hidden among the civilian populace, so a lot of it is trying to pick out the little cultural things—just the way the women act towards you, the way their kids wave at you or not, you know. If their kids get smacked by them as you wave at them or throw candy out the window at them.

As previously noted, the ruthless, dedicated, and well-entrenched insurgency in Tal’Afar presented significant challenges. Additionally, the layout of the town included very narrow alleyways, which made effective use of *Bradleys* and tanks more difficult, made air support more challenging, and gave insurgents ample hiding places. Perhaps the biggest challenge, though, was due to the ethnic mix in Tal’Afar. NCOs in a focus group from a military intelligence unit described this mix and some of the challenges it presented them:

Participant #2: You take [Tal’Afar] and it’s divided into . . . basically, there were five major neighborhoods and then those neighborhoods can be subdivided into, like each of them, ten different little sub-areas and then you have to factor in all the tribes, the different tribes in Tal’Afar. As far as major tribes, at least seven.

Participant #3: So each one of those tribes has a different leader who’s telling them different things on how to act, what to do, so we’ve got all that. The city it’s just a jungle of different views, even different cultures. There was, up in Tal’Afar there is, they’re Turkomans. They don’t even speak Arabic, they speak Turkoman, which, that was a big problem for us ‘cause also in Intel you’re gonna have linguists that interpret languages. No one [in Intel] speaks that language. That was a hard thing. We had to try to find people that could speak that language and help us.

Participant #5: They would attack each other, different tribes and Shi'a and Sunni of course. They would just murder each other across town.

These ethnic and tribal differences bred mistrust among the population, as described by an officer with the air defense artillery unit:

We’d go around and see old textbooks from the Saddam days. And in school, we count apples, you know, one, two, three. They’d count little Saddam heads. And so they’re just so used to seeing that and, you know, people in their 20s and 30s, their whole life they’ve been seeing praise for this one guy, Saddam. Praise everything he says, whatever he says is law. Hate this person because of this and don’t agree with these people because they’re Yezidi. They are from a different race than you. . . .

From the air, a helicopter pilot viewed the differences this way:

[There were] complexities just within the different groups and then complexities within those groups of the tribes where inner, you know, fighting would occur because of power struggles. Sunnis moving into Shi'a, Shi'a moving into Sunni neighborhoods. Yeah, like I said, you fly over one road, you know, there is a very good chance you're going to get shot at. And you fly on the other side of the road and, you know, kids are waving at you, families are showing babies. They love you. Those pockets make it difficult because most areas don't have that diversity in such a small area of responsibility.

This internal mistrust among the population gave some of them incentive to inform on others, yet this information was often unreliable. Armored scout NCOs from one focus group explained: "Informants, yeah, but you don't know if they were actually trying to just screw their buddy who had screwed them out of money or ran off with his sheep and they're just trying to get back at him. As far as how genuine or how good the information was, there's no telling." And another noted: "The information we got from the public was taken with a grain of salt because there was a lot of tribal conflict, you know, so I mean you didn't just necessarily, you know, discard it but I mean it was you wanted more than one person. You wanted, you know, four or five sources to say, 'Hey, this is a bad guy'."

As with any support and stability operations (SASO), there is an inherent need to balance security with civilians' rights and needs. This presented some unique challenges in the complex setting in and around Tal'Afar. One example of this challenge is given by an air defense platoon leader:

During the summer months, you know, there was a nationwide curfew between, I think it was 2200 and 0500. No one is supposed to be out. But something you have to understand is that, okay, well during the summer months when it's 120 degrees out, this farmer doesn't want to be pulling his plow. You know, that's understandable. So what does he do? He wakes up early and at three in the morning he's out, you know, working his fields. But, you know, from a distance that looks like this guy is leaving his house to go do something [bad].

So you go and you ask the guy, what are you doing? "Oh, I'm just out here trying to work my fields." Okay, well the rules state you're not supposed to leave your house until five, so can you please go back to your house. He's just trying to care about his daily business, you know. . . . [Y]ou do have to . . . enforce the rules, but at the same time, you have to understand that he's just trying to go about his daily life. He's not trying to do anything bad, so that just makes it all the more difficult when you're trying to conduct missions out there.

Rules intended to avert civilian casualties had to be reviewed and revised constantly, and clearly communicated to the local population. This presented

troops with several high-stakes dilemmas, as described by another platoon leader in the air defense focus group:

You'd see these [incidents] . . . where civilians were killed because they ran a check point accidentally, or they were in the wrong part of town, or they grabbed a soldier or tapped a soldier on his back to get his attention and, you know, ended up being shot accidentally. So you really got to be careful, but at the same time it's like a really fine balance, you know, between being careful and still being able to go out and do what you need to do.

This tension between avoiding unnecessary casualties and conducting operations in ways that "don't do the enemy's work" weighed on many soldiers' minds. A military intelligence officer from the 3d ACR noted in his memoir: "A common saying now, and one dotting the port-a-johns around camp, is 'I'd rather be judged by 12 than carried by 6.'"

Other challenges facing the 3d ACR in Tal'Afar included the responsibilities of not only providing security and weeding out the "bad guys" but sustaining all the other operations required to support that mission. As a medical NCO explained: ". . . [we had] the combat operations, you're self-sustaining with supply, medical operations, and intel. And it was our job to sustain all the missions in and around that area to include Biag [and other] surrounding towns." An officer responsible for support operations described the complications involved with this multitiered operation:

In Tal'Afar [my mission was] to support the 5200 soldiers of the 3d ACR, and then also during the retaking of the city, for 3 weeks it was also to provide support to the Iraqi 3rd Division which was about 5,000 soldiers. They also had some special operations and Iraqi commandos, so it was close to 15,000 troops that we had to support for that 3-week operation.

And that was a surprise to me. We had to get them food and water. Also, we had to get a bunch of port-a-johns out there. You know, you can't just order American-style port-a-johns for the Iraqis—they use a different kind. Where do you get a bunch of Iraqi port-a-johns? I wasn't trained in contracting for this kind of stuff, so it was very challenging.

And they wouldn't eat our MREs [meals-ready-to-eat], so we had to get different food for them. Had to be creative. I made a deal with a local shepherd to buy goats from him. We'd just give the Iraqis a goat, and they loved it. They'd kill it, butcher it, and cook it themselves. We also gave them 100 pound sacks of rice 'cause they'd get tired of their Hammils [kosher MREs] really fast.

We also had to support a bunch of other missions, like during the referendum and the elections. We had to get barricades. That's not easy. And Iraqi trucks to transport the ballots and everything. We couldn't use American stuff because we had to legitimize the process so the locals would buy into it. Ballot boxes, all that stuff. We had to figure out how to feed and house all the election workers, too.

Being sensitive to cultural customs meant that the military mission was not always aligned with local practices. As a logistics officer noted, “it was difficult—we had to meet and drink *chai* maybe three times with the same local leader before we developed the relationship enough to where we could even begin talking about making changes to the city. This was important, but we were also expected to be making civic improvements more quickly. The military was on a different timeline.”

As can be seen, soldiers involved in the battle for Tal’Afar were faced with a staggering blend of combat, logistical, and civil challenges. The importance of maintaining professionalism and diplomacy during this time was made clear by Col. McMaster’s directive to “not do the enemy’s work.” While this perspective was shared by many of the soldiers, putting it into practice was often immensely challenging. Medics, for example, had to treat wounded insurgents while giving no additional ammunition to any claims of abuse or disrespect for Muslim culture. This anecdote by a medical NCO clearly demonstrates the difficulty of this:

There was an instance . . . when [the insurgents] found out an official in the town in Tal’Afar was either giving us information, helping us in some way, or sympathetic. But, um, they ended up dragging him into the street and lighting him on fire. Killed the man, but the three that lit him on fire caught themselves on fire, like first, second, third degree burns, like probably 80 percent of their body at least.

And while we’re treating them, one of the guys that I was working on [was] educated in an American college, spoke almost perfect English, looking at our name tapes [and] saying he was going to remember our names, uh, go to America, rape our daughters, kill our wives. And to [hear] that and to scrub off the burnt flesh of somebody who just killed somebody who was a great asset to the American military in that town was, it was tough. It was definitely tough . . . and there were even some people who just had to leave for a while, like some medics and providers. They didn’t lose control but they were, like, man, I gotta, I gotta step outside ‘cause this guy is really starting to get to me.

The combination of stressors inherent in long-term support and stability operations (SASO) and combat operations eventually began to wear on the soldiers. Several commented on the difficulty of maintaining their commitment to the mission in the face of combined pressures, to include the incessant neediness of local Iraqis, erosion of support for the war on the U.S. home front, and difficulty in seeing direct, sustained gains as a result of their efforts. Participants in a focus group of armored scouts explained:

Participant #1: When I first got there, it was like you know, okay, I want to be there, and I want to help the people and stuff like that. And then as time went on, I grew to hate and dislike everybody. I don’t care man, woman, child, newborn baby, everybody. ‘Cause it’s just like you’re trying to help them so much. And you do so much for them. And at the same time, it was still like they’d come back and like basically just spit in your face and say, hey, you did nothing for me. Give me more. I’m like, you know, come

on, man, I literally gave the shirt off my back, and you still begging me for more stuff like I haven't helped you.

Participant #4: They always want more. You just get sick of it. You get tired of hearing kids begging for stuff everyday. You just sort of stop caring. And I hate to say it, but it's true. Just don't even want to deal with it anymore.

Interviewer: *Suffering from compassion fatigue?*

Participant #4: Yeah, I guess. You just get so tired of it. You just don't even want to deal with it anymore. Just shut up and go away. Just leave me alone. Let me do this little patrol and get back so I don't have to deal with these people.

Respondent #3: They want so much and they need so much that, even when you give it to them, you're not going to give them enough that would satisfy [them]. When you say no, they're like, "oh, you lie to me. You lie to me, mister."

In summary, the city of Tal'Afar presented a difficult and complex mission for the 3d ACR. They faced myriad challenges from a determined insurgency entrenched amid a diverse local population that was usually antagonistic and often violent towards each other. At the same time, the commanders and soldiers needed to balance their use of force with careful consideration for the locals' rights and allegiances. Done this way, they hoped that the bulk of the town's people would side with them, provide actionable intelligence, and make the dirty work of cleaning out the insurgents worthwhile. It was this context that set the stage for the 3d ACR's retaking of the city.

Operation Restoring Rights - Solutions.

Under Col. McMaster's leadership, the 3d ACR developed a number of strategies to deal with the challenges outlined above. To manage the increased threat of more sophisticated ambushes and IEDs, the first priority was to establish the security of the main road around the city. An NCO in a focus group from an armored unit explained:

That road [had not been] covered 24/7. When you don't cover something 24/7, you're gonna have problems. . . . [T]hey were getting bombed on that thing everyday. Iraqi soldiers were getting killed. American soldiers, core assets were getting blown up. When we came in and made the hard decision to cover 24/7, that all but stopped almost immediately. The first 2 weeks we had a lot of fire fights, and tanks quickly put an end to that. . . . Now, they could really focus internally on Tal'Afar and really start doing very mission-specific, surgical raids to take out known bad guys. Instead of doing a huge cordon and search and inflaming everybody and going through destroying houses, you're talking about specific information on known specific terrorists or insurgents from numerous sources.

The next challenge facing the 3d ACR was to isolate and kill or capture insurgents while minimizing civilian casualties. To this end, the 3d ACR built an earthen berm around the city to direct the flow of residents and those insurgents attempting to flee through one of only two checkpoints. Stationed at these checkpoints were trusted Iraqi informants who were able to identify and inform on insurgents attempting to exit the city, who were immediately detained. Additionally, residents were given advance notice of this campaign to allow them adequate time to depart in an orderly manner. As local residents exited the town, they were given temporary housing in camps set up outside the berm. Although this obviously tipped the insurgents to the planned operation, the tight control of exit points and informants at those points served to limit the number of insurgents who were able to escape. At least some of those who did escape were detained by units responsible for neighboring towns.

The 3d ACR also put in place an exceptionally comprehensive detainee operation. Consistent with the pre-deployment plans and training, this included a checklist of thorough processing of detainees in preparation for sending them to Iraqi courts, principles for a fair and evenhanded treatment of detainees, and recompense for wrongfully detained civilians. Further, a lot of effort was put into insuring that detained suspects were, in fact, insurgents. An armored crew NCO explained:

For example, you round people up, you take them from their family, [and if] you're doing things poorly, some may be guilty, some not. You just did this massive cordon and search, and now you're sending these guys up the chain. Congratulations, you now just linked them all up with people who are truly bad, and now you've just created a network so they can connect at places like Abu Ghraib or the other prisons throughout Iraq. So now they have a network and when they all get released, which is in a month or two, because we haven't done the proper paperwork or the right things or gotten Iraqi affidavits, when they get out, if they weren't insurgents, well, they sure are now. Because you've just destroyed their family and now they've gotten tied into a truly bad element, and you created more insurgents than you've taken out.

And an Intelligence NCO observed:

If we did make a mistake and we picked up the wrong guy and detained him for whatever reason, we would offer recompense for the trouble. You know, we would give them, you know, a job 'cause employment is nil there. And that makes the people like you more because that's bringing the money to their economy, which they need. If we did collateral damage, hey, we'll help you recover your losses. We're sorry and it's unavoidable, but we will help you. . . .

Soldiers in different focus groups and interviews repeated this theme, which some identified as a variation of the dictum, "Don't do the enemy's work." Clearly, they regarded the treatment and processing of detainees an important part of their work. A medical NCO elaborated:

And when you have [detainees] in a place like that (the local internment facility), they're either going to go higher to Abu Ghraib or they're going to get released. Well you can't treat everybody like they're going to go higher. You have to realize these are the same people that are going to be back on the street the next time you're rolling through and to maintain that level of professionalism and treat everybody like they're supposed to be treated, knowing that that's the next guy that's going to be watching you go by. I mean that's not doing the enemy's work or feeding their propaganda.

Once detained, acquiring and presenting evidence against the detainee for prosecution in the Iraqi court system is of critical importance. An NCO in an armor crew focus group explained:

. . . [O]kay, you capture a guy who attempted to kill you. He shot an RPG. You didn't kill him, but you captured him. Uh, now he goes with a packet [of evidence] just like the police here in the States. You have to create all this evidence because ultimately he is going to go through the Iraqi court system to be found guilty or not guilty. Well, the problem is when they go through about four or five levels before they get to Baghdad or the central prison before they get processed, before they get handed over to the Iraqi courts. And so, everything that you have [must be done properly].

[There was] a huge success rate for detainees who were captured at our level who not only made it all the way up, but they were actually put in prison after that point. . . . So the great thing about Tal'Afar that we did was the use of informants and people that were willing to come forward. . . . So, there would be several Iraqi statements. And this is where our JAG (legal) officer came in. He would go link up with the Iraqis and sit down with an interpreter and . . . the important piece was having Iraqis fill out affidavits on other Iraqis who were out not just killing American forces, but terrorizing and killing locals or cross boundary between the Shi'a and the Sunni. So that was a huge piece of it.

Once the main supply routes were secured and the local population was relocated outside of the berm, patrols into the city encountered a "ghost-town." According to one NCO:

The entire block was empty. We found like a vehicle IED factory in there and a couple of booby trapped houses. It was like we'd walk along and all the houses were empty, and we kicked in one door and there is this old lady with her chickens. The old lady [was] just laying around, she basically had no where else to go. She had one other family member, her son who hadn't been killed by the insurgents and he was in the hospital 'cause he was wounded by one of the vehicle bombs in the market place. So she had no one and nowhere to go, which is why she refused to leave. She was actually helpful because [she told us that the insurgents], "they're running around in that house over there. They've been using this rooftop." So I mean, she was pretty helpful.

Descriptions of the actual combat operations suggest that a portion of the enemy was well-entrenched and intent on fighting to the death. This led to some very intense combat engagements. Other accounts suggest that at least some of the insurgents recognized the futility of their situation and surrendered or

attempted to flee. Most respondents indicated that the large number of troops allocated for the operation (to include elements of the Iraqi army, the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division, and U.S. Special Forces), and having several units live in the city itself instead of on a protected Forward Operating Base (FOB) outside the berm, were crucial. Though it was more dangerous, U.S. units living within the city's walls were able to make better contacts, gather intelligence more easily, and quickly act on information—all of which would have been more problematic had U.S. units always retreated to an outside FOB at night.

Under these conditions, the 3d ACR was able to use its immense firepower in a measured way. A helicopter pilot we interviewed explained that close coordination with troops on the ground allowed him to use his weaponry more effectively:

I spent a lot of time with the ground guys just getting to know them, getting them to trust us as a team, and making sure that they were confident with us. With that confidence, it gave them, I think, the freedom to let us do a lot more than what guys would when they're new and inexperienced with us. . . . So it became, you know, very comfortable for them [on the ground] for us to shoot rockets 50-100 yards away from them, put a *Hellfire* [missile] into a building that they were, you know, 200 meters away from.

After the main combat operations, humanitarian and civil-affairs work quickly began in earnest. This time was crucial for maintaining trust with the local citizens and, consistent with Col. McMaster's directive to "not do the enemy's work," locals were allowed to return to their homes and were immediately offered assistance with rebuilding their neighborhoods. According to one NCO, the 3rd ACR's work included "Dropping food off, doing water drops, handing out radios to people," and a helicopter pilot noted: "Days after we went in and told the bad guys, it's time for a fight, we were there with humanitarian food, water, reparations that weren't done in Fallujah." An armored crew NCO explained:

Um, so it was full on combat operations and that lasted for about a week. But once that was done, then it was an immediate shift to stability operations and humanitarian operations. As people were let back in, we were giving them MREs. We were giving people water . . . giving money to those whose houses were destroyed. If you were a citizen [of Tal'Afar] and you proved it, we gave them about a hundred dollars apiece to help them, even if your house wasn't destroyed, to help paint or rebuild a little, like to do what we would call fix up work on your house. We did this for every single house in Tal'Afar. And I think that part of it really plays into getting the local populace on your side. There were also contractors who came in, Iraqi contractors, that came in and redid the streets and immediately started working on some of the infrastructure.

One episode, described by a soldier in the military intelligence focus group, illustrated Col. McMaster's commitment in this phase of the operation:

I was on a dismounted patrol with Col. MacMaster at the very end of Operation Restoring Rights and . . . this individual came up to us and was just yelling frantically and very emotionally distraught, and the interpreter with Col. MacMaster asked him, "What's going on, what's going on?" The guy said, "You guys were bombing houses in here and you blew up my house." I mean the guy was literally sitting on heaps of rudiment, which was his house. . . . And the Colonel said, "Well, tomorrow we will work at replacing your house. We will rebuild your house." And actually the next day engineers were on site working to rebuild his house.

Before the operation, the streets of Tal'Afar often were described as "like a ghost town." From all accounts, they now bustled with activity. Another NCO commented: "Before, you couldn't walk in Tal'Afar 'cause they might shoot at you. Now you had problems walking in Tal'Afar because you'd be swarmed by up to however many people were in that area within earshot. They would just surround you. That was cool. And all they wanted to do was shake hands with you." For the armored units, the experience was complicated by trying to fit their vehicles into the repopulated streets. According to one armored NCO: ". . . [B]efore it was a tight fit for the Bradleys to take us anywhere through the town. Now it was really difficult because you had the kids out in the streets trying to greet us and you had other vehicles trying to pass us, you know, people going about their lives." The changes in Tal' Afar are perhaps best captured by this NCO's account:

Right after about, what was it, 30 days to clear Tal'Afar, like directly after, we went on a patrol. The *Bradley* in front of me was going through like an alley. He turns and throws track, and I get up and pull rear security and we had a tank on either side pulling security, which didn't work at all because 60 Iraqis come out, like locals from Tal'Afar, come out and just swarm us, bring us *chai*, and I got back against the wall and a M-16 like this—they're close enough to stab you, you know. And they start bringing out tools, pulling tools out of the track and fixing it for us. Wouldn't let us touch a tool. And we were pretty wired on tea by the end of that night. They had no idea what they were doing, so it took a little bit.

In order to maintain the successes to this point, ensuing elections took additional efforts from U.S. troops. One enlisted soldier stated: "When the voting came out, we did a lot of stuff. We went and prepped the schools for voting. We trained personnel that [were] sitting at the polling sites. We passed out food for the polling sites. We even secured the polling site." Despite this involvement, as much as possible was done by Iraqis, including some polling site security. The elections were pivotal for both Iraqi civilians as well as American troops. As described by a platoon leader:

. . . seeing these people go miles and miles, and in Sinjar and Tal'Afar it rained like hell the day of the election. These people were facing, in most places facing mortar attacks, facing small arms fire, all this stuff to vote. I went, and I was in charge of bringing ballots from a small group of towns. There were 275,000 ballots on these trucks, and these people came from miles around. And I can't even imagine that happening here.

Most people [in the U.S.], if they had a traffic jam on their way to vote would be like, “screw this, I’m going home.” So, I mean these people, for the most part, I think want this.

And from an armored crew NCO:

For me, during OIF-III [the election] was the greatest moment. I’ll never forget this guy. He was carrying this old guy on his back and the interpreter talked to him like, “What are you guys doing?” He goes, “My father has never voted. He can’t walk, and they didn’t have a wheelchair. And I’m carrying him to the polling station so he can vote for the first time in his life.” . . . And that, to me that said a lot.

Discussion.

Although participants in one of our focus groups had complained about compassion fatigue, it was clear that the 3d ACR’s campaign in Tal’Afar, capped by the overwhelming turnout for the elections, gave them a huge sense of accomplishment. Upon reflection, many of them attributed their success directly to Col. McMaster’s leadership. He was credited with having a comprehensive understanding of the situation, taking lessons learned from the first deployment to improve training for this operation, and implementing a comprehensive plan to deal with a counterinsurgency at the tactical level. This officer’s view is representative of the many statements about the regiment’s commander for the second deployment: “Col. McMaster is the best leader I have ever worked for, at any level. He has a better understanding of the situation of Iraq, and what needs to be done, than anyone, at any level. Including in the State Department.”

Indeed, accolades touting the 3d ACR poured in. A number of newspaper accounts accorded the unit high marks and praise for their conduct in the Tal’Afar campaign. Police Chief al-Jibouri, by then major of Tal’Afar, wrote a letter to General George Casey, then U.S. military commander in Iraq, praising the actions of the 3d ACR and requesting that the unit be allowed to remain in Tal’Afar rather than return to Ft. Carson.²¹ Honoring that request was not possible (the 3d ACR was replaced in Tal’Afar by a brigade from the 1st Armored Division), so the mayor then traveled to Ft. Carson in June 2006 to again personally thank and praise the 3d ACR.²² President Bush devoted an entire speech to Tal’Afar, lauding the campaign with the words, “Tal’Afar is today a free city that gives reason for hope for a free Iraq.”²³

We must temper our rather rosy account here with the following observations. The participants in our interviews and focus groups were volunteers. In addition, we could not extend to them anonymity or confidentiality since these sessions were videotaped for posterity. Hence, while we can say that what we present here represents what our participants had to say, we cannot be sure what they said is representative of 3d ACR soldiers during the unit’s first and second deployments. This simply is the nature of this type of research.

Further, while we believe our participants would endorse as valid the story presented here, they might also say that our story is tidier than the messier realities as they experienced them. We addressed some of these tensions directly and only hinted at some others. For instance, while the 3d ACR prepared for its second deployment, this time focusing on counterinsurgency, it still was a unit configured to fight a conventional war. As such, along with this configuration is an institutional and organizational culture, also designed, as it were, for the conventional battlefield. Changing all this is a tall order.

Though Col. McMaster and his staff clearly outlined and repeatedly reinforced the boundaries within which they expected the unit to operate, it is our impression that there remained a variation within the unit in the extent to which this took hold. Evidence of this is thin, but we did observe variation in what the mantra, “Don’t do the enemy’s work,” meant to the officers and soldiers down the line. Officers we interviewed, almost without exception, said the mandate meant doing operations and conducting oneself in such a way that Iraqis are treated with respect. Consistent with the parlance of counterinsurgency doctrine, they intimated that “the people are the prize,” and that this ultimately is a “battle for hearts and minds.” In more pragmatic terms, every Iraqi that trusts and sides with the stated aims of the American mission in Iraq is one that does not have to be monitored, detained, or killed.

We found this message to be more widely interpreted among those further down in the ranks. For example, some enlisted soldiers and NCO’s offered interpretations such as, “Do not violate operational security by leaving maps laying around,” or “Don’t talk about operational stuff on the internet or in phone calls back home; you don’t know who’s listening.” While these operational security measures would fit with the words of not doing the enemy’s work, they do not appear to be as central to Col McMaster’s intent. Interestingly, the one memoir of the 3d ACR’s second deployment available at this time, by a military intelligence officer no less, makes no mention of this mandate, and seems to imply in his many statements that the Regiment’s humane policy of treating detainees was foisted upon them by a nosy, observant media presence and, further, unnecessarily tied their—the Americans’—hands.²⁴

Similarly, the port-a-john lore we cited above, “Better to be judged by 12 than carried by 6,” directs our attention to the inherent tension between concerns for force protection vs. winning hearts and minds.²⁵ Conventional battlefield thinking probably enhances force protection: searching a house containing suspect folks by knocking down the door, throwing in grenades, then rushing in at the ready is an established technique when searching enemy bunkers (while minimizing friendly casualties), but one destined in a counterinsurgency setting to produce large amounts of collateral damage among civilians. The graffiti suggests it is better to do the former and live, though one may have to face a court marshal, than to die carrying out the mandate.

Nonetheless, the Tal’Afar campaign is important for several reasons. As we also noted in an early section of the paper, expectancy theory and psychological contract theory both point to the importance of an implicit, informal contract between organizational members and the larger organization that addresses the link between these two questions: What does the organization expect of me, and what do I expect it to give me in return? In military units, these expectations are expressed most centrally in terms of what service and sacrifice the soldier is expected to extend and, on the other hand, to what extent does this service and sacrifice have value and have meaning? The grades they give in response to them often are at two levels: for the specific unit in which they serve and for the Army as a larger institution and enterprise, in this case with a mission to conduct war in Iraq.

While soldiers serve in the military for many reasons, their satisfaction typically boils down to how these two questions ultimately are answered. What grades do 3d ACR soldiers give? It is important in answering this to note that only two of the 3d ACR’s three armored squadron’s took part in Tal’Afar’s Operation Restoring Rights, along with the support and air squadrons. The remaining armored squadron continued the security mission in south Baghdad. Our impression is that the levels of morale and satisfaction with the demands of the second deployment are lower in the squadron “left behind,” for these touted successes clearly gave soldiers who took part in Operation Restoring Rights a burst of reason and meaning for their sacrifice. While hundreds of soldiers from all three squadrons participated at a “mass re-enlistment” ceremony at Ft. Carson, indicating in a concrete manner that the initial informal contract had indeed been fulfilled at both the unit and institutional levels, some 3d ACR soldiers could revel in the touted success of Tal’Afar only vicariously.

Finally, we have discussed the Tal’Afar campaign largely from the American point of view. What has been the fate of Tal’Afar itself since Operation Restoring Rights? The answer is mixed.²⁶ Reports indicate that sectarian tensions remain high, with Sunnis and Shi’ites hunkered down in their respective fortified neighborhoods, and the Sunnis, a majority in Tal’Afar but a minority in Iraq, still feeling singled out for scrutiny by the military. These divisions are deep, have been part of the Iraqi landscape for some time, and clearly are not going away any time soon. Further, as the plea from the mayor to General Casey reflects, the 3d ACR’s operation, while successful, is only one phase of the on-going struggle. Violent insurgents were rooted out, but that accomplishment stands until they reestablish their presence. The mayor worried that without continuing presence of a force with the capabilities and mindset displayed by the 3rd ACR, this step forward will be only temporary. This reminds us that, while some elements of the psychological contract lie within the purview of the individual’s unit and the Army itself, some critical elements of it necessarily are beyond their control.

ENDNOTES

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